

March 8, 2022

Agenda Item 8, S.B. No. 247 (RAISED) AN ACT REQUIRING PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO ESTABLISH A POLICY REGARDING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ON CAMPUS.

Senator Slap, Representative Elliott, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee,

My name is Michael Hernández, and I am a student at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, the former Student Body President, and a Stamford resident. I am here to support S.B. No. 247 because I believe that our institutions of higher education should be committed to freedom of expression since it is a fundamental part of their civic mission.

During my time as an undergraduate, I have had the privilege to work on this issue with support from the United Nations, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, and the University of Chicago. We hosted conferences and meaningful conversations here at the Storrs campus. Each experience has come with controversy--highlighting the need to remain committed to free expression even if it does not translate into supporters or voters. We cannot uphold free expression only when we like what we hear.

At a time when our campuses are divided along partisan lines, this Committee can make a difference by telling our institutions of higher education to adopt a policy that upholds free expression today and tomorrow, when liberal views are prominent and when conservative views are prominent, under current leadership and under future leadership.

There is no shortage of examples of statements supporting free expression on college campuses. From Richmond to Chicago, private and public colleges are adopting the Chicago Principles, the highest commitment

I hope the Committee will vote favorably and I urge leadership to bring the bill to the full House and Senate for a vote. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Michael Hernández

University of Connecticut